WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1.    A navigation system comprising:

an image search unit for searching across an image database by using input image data, as a first search key, where the database stores image data obtained by imaging various areas and extracting at least one piece of image data bearing a predetermined or higher level of resemblance to the first search key;

a search-result output unit for outputting the extracted image data; and

a destination determination unit for determining position information stored and correlated with image data selected by a user from among the output image data to be a destination.

2.    A navigation system according to Claim 1, wherein the image search unit includes a feature-amount extraction unit for extracting a feature amount of the first search key and a matching unit for extracting at least one piece of image data whose feature amount bears a predetermined or higher level of resemblance to the extracted feature amount by comparing the extracted feature amount against a feature amount of each of the image data stored in the image database.

3.    A navigation system according to Claim 1, wherein the image search unit performs search only for image data correlating with position information specified by travel history information of a vehicle according to an instruction transmitted from the user.

4.    A navigation system according to Claim 1, wherein the image data stored in the image database is correlated with information indicating an imaging date of the image data, and wherein the image search unit performs search only for data on at least one image imaged on the same date as a travel date obtained from the travel history information of a vehicle, or a predetermined imaging date within a predetermined error range.

5.      A navigation system according to Claim 1, wherein the first search key is input via a removable recording medium to a main body of the navigation system.

6.      A navigation system according to Claim 1, wherein the first search key is obtained and input by segmenting a predetermined part of an image in predetermined timing, the image being received by a TV reception device provided in a vehicle.

7.      A navigation system according to Claim 1, further comprising an area segmenting unit for extracting an outline of an object included in the first search key and segmenting a predetermined area from the first search key, wherein the image search unit searches across the image database by using image data within the segmented area, as a second key.

8.      A navigation system according to Claim 1, further comprising:

a search-object selection unit for permitting the user to determine whether or not the search is performed by using character information included in the first search key;

a character recognition unit for recognizing character information included in the first search key, when the user determines to search by using the character information; and

a character search unit for searching point-determination information that is stored and correlated with the image data stored in the image database by using the recognized character information, as a third search key, and extracting at least one piece of image data whose character information bears a predetermined or higher level of resemblance to the third search key.

9.      A navigation system according to Claim 1, wherein where a predetermined or higher number of image data is extracted through the search performed by using the first search key, the search-result output unit provides a plurality of narrowing-down conditions to the user for reducing the number of the

extracted image data and outputs image data obtained by the reduction according to a predetermined condition selected by the user from among the narrowing-down conditions.

10.     A navigation system according to Claim 9, further comprising a condition sort unit for controlling information about use frequency of the narrowing-down conditions selected by the user and sorting the presentation order of the narrowing-down conditions in decreasing order of the use frequency.

11.     A navigation method comprising:

searching across an image database by using input image data, as a first search key, where the database stores image data obtained by imaging various areas and extracting at least one piece of image data bearing a predetermined or higher level of resemblance to the first search key;

outputting the extracted image data; and

determining position information stored and correlated with image data selected by a user from among the output image data to be a destination.

12.     A navigation method according to Claim 11, wherein image-data extraction includes:

extracting a feature amount of the first search key; and

extracting at least one piece of image data whose feature amount bears a predetermined or higher level of resemblance to the extracted feature amount by comparing the extracted feature amount against a feature amount of each of the image data stored in the image database.

13.     A navigation method according to Claim 11, wherein image-data extraction is achieved by performing search only for image data correlating with position information specified by travel history information of a vehicle according to an instruction transmitted from the user.

14.     A navigation method according to Claim 11, wherein image-data extraction is achieved by performing search only for data on at least one image

imaged on the same date as a travel date obtained from travel history information of a vehicle, or a predetermined imaging date within a predetermined error range.

15.     A navigation method according to Claim 11, wherein the first search key is obtained and input via a removable recording medium to a main body of the navigation system.

16.     A navigation method according to Claim 11, wherein the first search key is obtained and input by segmenting a predetermined part of an image in predetermined timing, the image being received by a TV reception device provided in a vehicle.

17.     A navigation method according to Claim 11, further comprising extracting an outline of an object included in the first search key, whereby a predetermined area is segmented from the image data, wherein the image extraction is achieved by searching across the image database by using image data within the segmented area, as a second search key.

18.     A navigation method according to Claim 11, further comprising:
        determining whether or not the search is to be performed by using character information included in the first search key;
        recognizing character information included in the first search key, when determining to search by using the character information; and
        searching point determination information that is stored and correlated with the image data stored in the image database by using the recognized character information, as a third search key, thereby extracting at least one piece of image data whose character information bears a predetermined or higher level of resemblance to the third search key.

19.     A navigation system according to Claim 11, wherein when a predetermined or higher number of image data is extracted through the search performed by using the first search key, outputting the extracted image data is achieved by providing a plurality of narrowing-down conditions to the user for

reducing the number of the extracted image data and outputting image data obtained by the reduction performed according to a predetermined condition selected by the user from among the narrowing-down conditions.

20.     A navigation method according to Claim 19, further comprising controlling information about use frequency of the narrowing-down conditions selected by the user, so as to sort the presentation order of the narrowing-down conditions in decreasing order of the use frequency.